



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 14 November 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
14 NOVEMBER 1968

1. East Germany -
Berlin

The East Germans are pumping up West German fears with new rumors of further restrictions on travel to West Berlin. At practically no cost, the East Germans thus test West German and allied reactions to another slice at the West Berlin salami, put a little heat into allied relations, and drain off some more of the West Berliners' morale. In Bonn, some officials are predicting the imposition of new East German controls by tomorrow.

2. Czechoslovakia

Dubcek and his liberal Communist colleagues will be asking the party Central Committee today to approve further concessions to Moscow's requirements for "normalization." The party plenum will probably go along, and may even have to submit to the inclusion of Soviet-backed conservatives in its top leadership.

Student leaders are defiantly planning a general strike and street marches if the conservatives pick up much ground. Dubcek says he will answer protests with force.

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3. Yugoslavia

The Yugoslavs are feeling the pinch of Soviet economic retaliation for their opposition to the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Moscow has canceled negotiations on several important Yugoslav sales contracts and deferred talks on next year's trade protocols, and Soviet banks have refused to purchase Yugoslav commercial paper. These and other pressures, if continued, could put a sharp crimp in the Yugoslav economy, and a complete break in Warsaw Pact commercial relations would severely depress it.

Although Belgrade and its Warsaw Pact trading partners agreed not to let politics interfere with trade relations, distrust of Moscow will lead the Yugoslavs to take out insurance by broadening their commercial contacts with the West. In a real crunch, they would have to reverse the liberal trend in their domestic economic management and appeal to the West for new credit assistance.

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4. United Kingdom

The latest British Gallup Poll shows another drop in the Labour government's popularity. Support for the Conservative Party was rated at 50.5 percent, for Labour only 32. The pollsters interpret their findings as anti-Labour reaction rather than a positive response to the Conservatives, even though the opposition party gained 10 percentage points on Labour since the last poll. Only 20 percent of those polled approved of the government's record, and 60 percent expressed positive disapproval. Thirty-one percent approved Wilson's personal record, a drop of 12 percent, and Conservative leader Heath gained one percent over the last poll to win the approval of 37 percent of the electorate.

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5. Guatemala

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6. Ecuador

President Velasco has finally declared Ecuador's "acceptance" of last year's Declaration of Punta del Este on the principles animating the Alliance for Progress. He did so at a weekend press conference in which he had some choice words for his predecessor, Otto Arosemena, for the grandstand play that left Ecuador's president the only nonsigner.

Velasco also went out of his way to stress that he is looking forward to meeting President-elect Nixon and the other American presidents at a new hemispheric conference to "revitalize" the Alliance.

7. Pakistan

Ayub will be free with the truncheon if rioting continues following former foreign minister Bhutto's arrest. He has the forces necessary to contain any difficulties.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Recent Developments: The North Vietnamese have stepped up daytime supply activity and road repairs in southern North Vietnam since the 1 November bombing halt. More than 200 trucks were noted in photography of 10 November at a ferry crossing just 11 miles south of the 19th Parallel. About 200 trucks were also noted within the Vinh city limits in 8 November photography. Before 1 November only light traffic was observed in both these areas. Farther south, photography during the past week has shown as many as 170 trucks--mostly moving south--on Route 15 leading to the Mu Gia Pass.

Recent photography also indicates that for the first time since the February 1967 Tet bombing halt, the Communists are using coastal freighters with capacities of up to 2,500 tons for moving cargo south of the 19th Parallel. Rear services communications on shipping off the coast of southern North Vietnam up to 10 November shows substantially more shipping capacity in use than was reported by pilots before 1 November. It cannot yet be determined whether an increase in daylight trucking and shipping means an increase in total supply activity or only some shift-over from night to day operations now that bombings have stopped.

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Photography prior to 1 November had shown that routes leading into the Laotian panhandle were extensively damaged and were apparently having difficulties at times supporting through traffic.

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Reaction to Reconnaissance Missions: US reconnaissance missions over North Vietnam are drawing mixed reactions from Communist air defense forces. There have been 15 unmanned reconnaissance flights north of the 19th Parallel since 1 November, most of which drew some kind of enemy reaction. Three of these aircraft were shot down.

The Communists are also making vigorous attempts to bring down manned US high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft. Intercepted communications on SAM links show that the North Vietnamese are constantly attempting to refine firing techniques against the fast-flying aircraft. To date, however, only a few SAM units involved in the reaction have succeeded in firing their missiles.

Tactical air reconnaissance missions below the 19th Parallel have drawn ground fire on about 20 occasions since 1 November. The firings for the most part have been limited to light antiaircraft barrages and tracer bullets. None of these manned missions has been downed, and only one aircraft has been hit.

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During the first quarter of 1965, an average of 12 Japanese ships per month called at North Vietnam, most of them in ballast to carry North Vietnamese coal back to Japan. Since March 1965, however, only one Japanese vessel has called at North Vietnam--in May 1968. Plans for further trips were canceled shortly

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thereafter, following informal US representations and informal pressure by the Japanese Government.

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Hon Gai - Kep Rail Line: Construction has resumed on the Hon Gai - Kep rail line after a three-month lull. Photography of mid-October reveals that bridges and other facilities have been worked on throughout the 66-mile route. However, most of the construction, including several rail spurs, three short bridges, and a causeway, has been concentrated in an area 30 miles west of Hon Gai.

This line has been under construction since June 1967, but work was interrupted by flooding during the 1968 rainy season. [REDACTED]

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When completed, the line will connect North Vietnam's main coal producing area and the secondary port of Hon Gai with the main industrial areas of North Vietnam.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report.

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